

Number 126-127 – 31 August 2023

Published by Centro de Integridade Pública, Maputo, Mozambique

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Renamo dissidents can compete in the municipal elections, says Constitutional Council

Democratic Revolution (RD), a group of dissidents from Renamo, was prevented from standing in the municipal elections, because it delivered its candidate nomination papers late. But the Constitutional Council yesterday (30 August) ruled that the RD should be authorised to stand. As a result the drawing of lots for places on the ballot paper, held earlier this week, was also annulled.

Although the deadline for submitting nomination papers expired on 11 August, the RD had the right to submit its papers up until 14 August, because the Constitutional Council had issued a ruling on 4 August which instructed this party to change its symbols within a period of ten days. This Constitutional Council ruling was in response to the complaint from Renamo that the RD had used its symbols.

The CNE refused to accept the RD's paperwork, because it presented its candidacy beyond the deadline of 11 August.

A further problem which led the Constitutional Council to overturn the CNE decision was that the RD's papers had been rejected, not by the CNE plenary, but by the CNE working group set up to receive the nomination papers. That is a violation of the electoral legislation.

Hence, the Constitutional Council ordered that the CNE should receive the RD's nomination papers within 48 hours, and decided whether to accept or reject them at a plenary session.

Elections are a lucrative business for members of Frelimo

Without any public tender, the National Elections Commission (CNE) awarded the contract to supply ballot boxes to Escopil Holding, worth 93mn meticaís (\$1.5mn). In the last two election cycles (2013/2014 and 2019), Escopil always won the CNE contracts for the supply of election materials.

In the minutes of awarding the contract, the CNE recognised that Escopil had a bad track record. It omitted the name of Filomena Mutoropa as candidate for mayor of Nampula, forcing the annulment

and repetition of the election in Nampula city. And in 2014 an entire truckload of voting material was stolen, including ballot papers from Pebane and Namacurra districts.

Despite these irregularities, regarded as serious, the CNE, on STAE's proposal, has once again allocated the business of supplying electoral material to Escopil.


Escopil Holding has five equal partners: Ana Paulo Samo Gudo Chichava, Joel Paulo Samo Gudo, José António da Conceição Chichava, Rogério Paulo Samo Gudo, and Vitória Paulo Samo Gudo. These are members of the Frelimo nomenklatura. José Chichava was Minister of State Administration and Ana Paula Samo Gudo Chichava was Deputy Minister of Coordination of Environmental Action.

The strategy of the CNE in attributing public tenders for the supply of election material is always the same: delay the launch of the public tender, and then resort to the direct award of contracts, with the excuse of "lack of time". This was how the business of supplying the voter registration equipment was awarded directly to the Laxton-Artes Gráficas consortium of the Sidat family, who are influential members of Frelimo. This is a business valued at 8.1 billion meticaís (\$125 mn).

A final late award is also being questioned. It has been known for months that 138 cars would be needed for election supervision. Yet this contract was done as a direct award on 7 August to MHL Auto for 342mn Meticaís (\$5.3mn), with each vehicle costing the CNE 2.4mn MT (\$37,000). Who benefitted?

Illegal Frelimo candidate for mayor in Beira

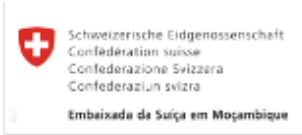
The CNE approved candidates on 18 August, including the Frelimo list which has as head of list - and thus candidate for mayor - Stella Zeca, present secretary of state for the province of Sofala. The Public Integrity Centre ([CIP](#)) in a report this morning (31 August) argues that The Secretary of State is a political position, intended to provide a Frelimo Maputo control of the elected mayor or governor. Thus she cannot stand without taking leave from her present position.

	FICHA TÉCNICA:	ENDEREÇOS:
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Bulletin funded by:



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